

4. Parcels important to the movement of livestock.

T3-Jerome County Canyon Rim Transfer. 258 acres. This area would be available for transfer from Federal ownership as described for T1, but only if zoning regulations were changed to allow commercial or residential development.

Parcels were included in T3 for the same reasons as discussed for T1.

T4-Bureau of Reclamation Transfer. 3,751 acres. These lands would be withdrawn for the Minidoka Irrigation Project and developed for irrigated farmland by the Bureau of Reclamation. Developed lands would be transferred from Federal ownership by the Bureau of Reclamation. Approximately 1,591 acres would be retained by the Bureau of Reclamation for wildlife and recreation management.

These are lands that are compatible with this project.

Other Resource Uses in Alternative C.

Fire Management. Portions of the planning area, totaling 181,086 acres, would be under full fire suppression in Alternative C. Vineyard Creek ACEC (L6) and Box Canyon ACEC (L7) would be under full suppression to protect the naturalness and scenic quality of the areas. The Substation Tract ACEC would be under full suppression to protect natural vegetation communities. The Isolated Tracts (L11) and Pronghorn Winter Range HMP area (discussed below under Wildlife Habitat) would be under full suppression to protect the vegetation, primarily brush, important to wildlife habitat management objectives. The areas discussed above would also be given priority for fire suppression in the fire management plan.

The remainder of the planning area would be covered by a limited suppression plan. The purpose of this plan would be to more efficiently use fire suppression funds. However, since the planning area is subject to large fires, limited suppression would only take place when the burning index is below 22. This would typically require full suppression during July and August. Large, repeated fires cannot be tolerated from the wildlife habitat and soil erosion standpoint.

The General Fire Suppression Guidelines in Appendix B under "Standard Operating Procedures" would apply to most of the planning area. Exceptions to these would occur in portions of the planning area totalling at least

278,336 acres. ^{1/} Surface disturbing equipment would be more likely to be used in Isolated Tracts (L11), Pronghorn Winter Range HMP areas (see Map 15), and brush protection areas to protect the vegetation, primarily brush, important to wildlife habitat management objectives. Surface disturbing equipment would also be more likely to be used in the Substation Tract ACEC to protect natural vegetation communities. On the other hand, use of surface disturbing equipment would be very limited in WSAs recommended suitable (L1) to protect wilderness character, in Cedar Fields SRMA (L10) to protect fragile soils and cultural resources, in the Oregon Trail area and Devil's Corral (L9a) to protect cultural resources, and in the Areas of Geologic Interest (L12) to protect fragile geologic formations. Guidelines for fire suppression in the above areas would be included in the fire management plan.

Prescribed fire could be used as a tool for accomplishing the 19,000 acres of brush control proposed under Livestock Forage. The guidelines for Prescribed Fire in Appendix D under "Range Improvements" would apply. The use of prescribed fire in areas other than those proposed for brush control would be allowed only if found to be environmentally acceptable through consideration of environmental effects in the NEPA process. Such use could include projects such as noxious weed abatement or habitat management not foreseen at this time.

Prescribed fire would not be used in Substation Tract ACEC (L4), Vineyard Creek ACEC (L6), or Box Canyon/Blueheart Springs ACEC (L7).

In Alternative C, 100 miles of roads would be maintained annually to improve access for fire suppression forces and provide secure fuel breaks that could be used for firelines. This would cost approximately \$10,000 annually. The roads to be maintained are presently very rough and/or infrequently used. Vegetation growing in the roadways limits their usefulness as fire lines. The objective of this road maintenance is to help suppression crews keep fires smaller. This would benefit the wildlife habitat and soil erosion situation greatly.

For Alternative C, roads would be maintained in Fire Ecology Zones 1, 2, and 3. These areas have a high potential for frequent burns. Improved access and fuel breaks in these areas would help fire suppression efforts greatly.

Although other management practices to reduce wildfire size and occurrence are not proposed for Alternative C, they could be considered in the future as availability and effectiveness are demonstrated. Such practices might include seeding of fire resistant plant species in strips. The environmental effects of any such practices would be considered in the NEPA process before practices could be implemented.

^{1/} The acreage involved in the brush protection areas and the Oregon Trail area is unknown at this time and would be determined in detailed examinations.

Wildlife Habitat. Several wildlife habitat objectives have been covered under the discussion of multiple use areas for Alternative C. Habitat objectives for the hybrid trout are covered under L6-Vineyard Creek ACEC; for the Shoshone sculpin, they are covered under L7-Box Canyon/Blueheart Springs ACEC; for the Bliss Rapids snail, they are covered under both L6 and L7; for ring-necked pheasant and gray partridge (upland game birds), they are covered under L11-Isolated Tracts. The discussion in Fire Management above specifies actions that would benefit wildlife. Following is a discussion of other wildlife habitat objectives for Alternative C.

Brush areas valuable to wildlife would be given priority for fire suppression in the fire management plan. Specific areas of importance would be identified in detailed examinations and development of HMPs discussed below. Guidelines for fire suppression would be developed and incorporated into the fire management plan. Protection of brush pockets would be important in maintaining or enhancing habitat for sage grouse, pronghorn, mule deer, and non-game wildlife. It should be noted that areas of brush valuable to wildlife would likely change over time as some brush stands are burned by wildfire while others recover.

Artificial nest structures would be constructed for the ferruginous hawk, Swainson's hawk, and burrowing owl to increase populations. Specific numbers and locations of these structures would be determined in detailed examination of habitat suitable for each species. Ferruginous hawk nest structures would be placed in remote areas. Swainson's hawk nest structures would be placed on Isolated Tracts (L11). Burrowing owl nest boxes would be placed primarily on Isolated Tracts, but also throughout the breeding range.

A Sage Grouse HMP would be prepared to guide management in the sage grouse winter habitat area covering about 67,000 acres (see Map 7). Objectives of this HMP would be to maintain and enhance sage grouse habitat by maintaining adequate, suitable areas of brush and providing additional forbs for brood rearing. Suitable forbs would be included in range seedings in this area. Guidelines for fire suppression to protect brush would be developed and incorporated into the fire management plan.

A Pronghorn Winter Range HMP would be prepared for approximately 171,000 acres shown on Map 15. Objectives of this HMP would be to improve winter habitat for pronghorn by protecting valuable brush stands and increasing the brush component of the areas. Detailed examination would be required to determine the specific areas most important to the wintering animals. The possibility of seeding brush or fire resistant plant species would be examined for feasibility. Guidelines for fire suppression to protect brush would be developed and incorporated into the fire management plan.

A Pronghorn Summer Range HMP would be prepared for 60,000 acres in the Wildhorse Allotment (see Map 9). Objectives of this HMP would be to improve summer habitat for pronghorn by maintaining adequate areas of brush, providing additional forbs, and providing new water sources. Suitable forbs would be included in range seedings in this area. Guidelines for providing additional water sources would be developed. Guidelines for fire suppression to protect brush would be developed and incorporated into the fire management plan.

Livestock Forage. Provide 144,776 AUMs of livestock forage. Approximately 856,550 acres of public land would be included in grazing allotments (see Maps 1 and 9). Average stocking rate would be 5.9 acres per AUM.

The objectives for Alternative C would be to maintain existing perennial forage plants, maintain soil stability, stabilize areas currently in downward trend, and increase availability of perennial forage plants.

The following range improvements would be accomplished in support of achieving the objectives stated above.

- 25,500 acres of reseeding
- 19,000 acres of brush control
- 54 miles of fencing
- 74 miles of pipeline
- 110 water troughs
- 9 wells
- 24 cattleguards
- 17 miles of road construction

Total cost of improvements = \$1,608,000

20-year maintenance and replacement cost = \$669,200

In Alternative C, preference levels were adjusted as follows.

1. Allotments with upward trend in all pastures were given an increase.
2. Allotments with static trend pastures were given an increase if reasonable improvements to support the increase can be made.
3. Allotments with downward trend in all pastures were not given increases since range improvements might be necessary just to support current actual use levels. If improvements to support current actual use levels would not be reasonable, allotments with downward trend in all pastures were given a decrease.

Increases could be up to full preference or beyond depending on trend, actual use, and feasibility of range improvements. Proposed increases would be partially carried by range improvements in some allotments, by existing forage production and facilities in others. No grazing preference was proposed on lands in a transfer category or on Isolated Tracts that are or would be fenced to exclude livestock. A more detailed discussion of the methodology used in determining the stocking level for Alternative C is contained in Appendix D under "Determining the Proposed Stocking Rate."

The grazing preference level proposed for Alternative C is somewhat lower than in Alternative B. It was tempered by an estimation of how many range improvements can be accomplished with future funding levels that can reasonably be expected. Only improvements likely to yield a benefit/cost ratio greater than one were included. The potential productivity of the land was more closely considered.

The proposed stocking level of 144,776 AUMs is 48 percent higher than the current five-year average actual use and is 3 percent less than the current active preference, but it would be supported on 6 percent less land. There are several reasons why this stocking level was chosen.

- No significant conflicts with other resources were identified at this stocking level.
- The methodology used to determine the proposed stocking level indicates that the objectives for livestock forage can be met at this stocking level with the range improvements listed above.
- Although the current rate of 34 percent nonuse may continue into the future, the exact rate of nonuse is unpredictable. Actual use is tied to market conditions and other factors, such as weather. Thus, if Alternative C were implemented, the proposed stocking level of 144,776 AUMs may or may not be fully utilized. The full stocking level of 144,776 AUMs is used for analysis of the environmental effects in the event it were fully utilized.
- The proposed stocking level of 144,776 AUMs for Alternative C could not be supported in a drought year when forage production from annual plant species is low. This would be handled by temporary suspension.

The initial stocking rate for Alternative C would be 149,135 AUMs (present active preference). Adjustments toward the proposed preference, 144,776 AUMs, would occur based on monitoring data as discussed under Implementation in Appendix D. Increases dependent on range improvements would occur only as funding for the necessary improvements is available and the projects are completed. Range improvement guidelines are included in Appendix D. Decreases resulting from land transfers would occur only as the identified tracts are transferred from Federal ownership.

No changes in season of livestock use are proposed in Alternative C. This is because no resource conflicts were identified that would be resolved by such changes. However, changes in season of livestock use could be made in the future after considering environmental effects in the NEPA process if supported by monitoring.

New AMPs or CRMPs would be developed for nine allotments. This would bring the total area covered to 97 percent of the allotted acres.

In Alternative C, it is assumed that 21,910 sheep AUMs would be converted to cattle AUMs. Actual conversion would be consistent with the Shoshone District Conversion Policy. The assumed conversion is based on the same assumptions as described for Alternative B.

Cultural Resources. In addition to the Cultural Resource Management Plans discussed for Devil's Corral (L9a) and the Cedar Fields SRMA (L10), two other plans would be prepared; one for the Oregon Trail and one for Wilson

Butte Cave. These plans would specify the degree of protection and the interpretation measures appropriate for the areas. In the case of the Oregon Trail, fire suppression guidelines to limit surface disturbance would be developed and incorporated into the fire management plan.

Soils. Several actions have been discussed which would help meet the objective of keeping soil erosion within tolerable levels. ORV use would be restricted in portions of the Snake River Rim SRMA (L9) and in the Cedar Fields SRMA to protect fragile soils. Fires would be given full suppression when the burning index is above 22 to help protect soils. Road maintenance would be conducted in key areas to help keep fires smaller, thus helping to protect soils.

In addition to the actions listed above, areas with severe erosion problems would be stabilized. At the present time, 150 acres of active sand dunes in the Lake Walcott area have been identified for a seeding project to stabilize the dunes. Other areas would be treated as they are identified, provided treatment would be feasible.

Priority would be given to emergency treatment of severe erosion areas caused by wildfire.

Summary of Activity Plans Required for Implementation of Alternative C.

Two Wilderness Management Plans (excluding Great Rift)

- One for each WSA recommended suitable.

One ORV Designation Implementation Plan

- Detailing how the ORV designations for the planning area would be implemented including public awareness, signing, and enforcement.

Three Recreation Activity Management Plans (RAMPs)

- One for each special recreation management area (SRMA)

Four Habitat Management Plans (HMPs)

- One would be a revision of the Isolated Tracts HMP.
- The others would be prepared for pronghorn winter range, pronghorn summer range, and sage grouse winter habitat.

Four Cultural Resource Management Plans

- One each for Devil's Corral, Cedar Fields, Wilson Butte Cave, and the Oregon Trail.

One Cave Management Plan

- For the L12 areas (Areas of Geologic Interest).

Nine AMPs, CRMPs, or other appropriate plans

- One for each of the nine allotments specified in Appendix D.

One Limited Fire Suppression Plan

The fire management plan will include guidelines to

- limit surface disturbance in WSAs recommended suitable, Cedar Fields SRMA, the Oregon Trail, and Areas of Geologic Interest.
- protect vegetation valuable to wildlife on Isolated Tracts, Pronghorn Winter Range HMP area, and brush protection areas.
- protect the naturalness and scenic quality of Vineyard Creek ACEC and Box Canyon/Blueheart Springs ACEC.
- protect the natural vegetation communities of the Substation Tract ACEC.

Some the activity plans listed above may be consolidated into a single plan where two or more activities have activity plan needs in the same general area.

Alternative D

Goals. In this alternative, protection of fragile resources and wildlife habitat, preservation of natural systems and cultural values, and nonconsumptive resource uses would be favored. Management direction would favor habitat management to increase wildlife populations, protection of cultural resources, protection of wilderness qualities, and opportunities for general dispersed recreation.

Multiple Use and Transfer Areas in Alternative D. Map 5 shows the multiple use and transfer areas for Alternative D.

M1-Moderate Use. 788,791 acres. No special limitations or restrictions on the type or intensity of resource use would be applied in this area. Valid uses would be allowed subject to environmental review and stipulations or special conditions to protect resources. This area would be open to ORV use.

L1-WSA Recommended Suitable. 154,015 acres. These areas would be recommended suitable for designation by Congress as a part of the Wilderness Preservation System. This includes all six WSAs in the planning area.

All of the WSAs would be recommended suitable in Alternative D, because they are all considered to be manageable as wilderness. Protection of wilderness qualities is favored by the goals of Alternative D.

If designated wilderness by Congress, the areas would be closed to ORV use. New mining claims would be prohibited. Mineral leasing would not be prohibited by wilderness designation, but wilderness character would be considered in making mineral leasing decisions. Land uses would be restricted to those compatible with BLM's Wilderness Management Policy. Utility developments would be effectively prohibited. A wilderness management plan would be prepared for each WSA designated. The wilderness management plan would include fire suppression guidelines designed to protect or enhance wilderness character.

If not designated wilderness by Congress, the areas would generally be managed as M1 areas as described above. The exception is 2,108 acres of areas of geologic interest within the Raven's Eye and Bear Den Butte WSAs which would be managed as L12 areas as described below. No other special designations or developments would be proposed. The restrictions on ORVs, minerals, land uses, and fire described above would not apply.

L3-Sand Butte ORV Closure. 1,751 acres. This area would be managed as described for M1 areas except that it would be closed to ORV use. The reason for the ORV closure is the same as described for L3 in Alternative C. If the Sand Butte WSA is not designated wilderness by Congress, this area would no longer be closed to ORV use.

L4-ACEC-Substation Tract. 440 acres. This area would be designated an ACEC to focus management attention on special values as described for L4 in Alternative C. ORV use would be limited to designated roads and trails. No surface occupancy associated with mineral lease development would be allowed.

L5-ACEC-Silver Sage Playa. 10 acres. This area would be designated an ACEC to focus management attention on special values. The area contains a vegetation community uncommon in the Shoshone District. The vegetation community is in as good condition as any similar community in the District and could be valuable for research and reference. Desert Land Entry applications have been filed on this area.

Management to protect the relict vegetation community would entail retention in Federal ownership and aggressive fire control efforts. Fire suppression guidelines would be developed for the area. The area would be closed to ORV use to protect the vegetation. No surface occupancy associated with mineral lease development would be allowed.

The area would be given priority for fire suppression in the fire management plan and would be under full fire suppression.

L6-ACEC-Vineyard Creek. 105 acres. This area would be designated an ACEC to focus management attention on special values as described for L6 in Alternative C. The area would be closed to ORV use. No surface occupancy associated with mineral lease development would be allowed. Mineral material sales would be prohibited.

L7-ACEC-Box Canyon/Blueheart Springs. 128 acres. This area would be designated an ACEC to focus management attention on special values as described for L7 in Alternative B. No surface occupancy associated with mineral lease development would be allowed. The area would be open to ORV use.

L8-Little Wood River SRMA. 3,061 acres. The riparian habitat and fishery of this area would be maintained or improved to support quality sport fishing opportunities as described for L8 in Alternative B.

In Alternative D, 274 acres have been added to L8 as compared to Alternative B. The additional area is separated from the rest by private land, but was included in Alternative D since wildlife habitat enhancement and opportunities for general dispersed recreation are favored in Alternative D.

A recreation activity management plan would be prepared for the area. The area would be open to ORV use.

L9-Snake River Rim SRMA. 15,617 acres. This area would be managed to provide for a wide variety of recreation activities including rifle shooting, archery, motorcycle riding/racing, picnicking, sightseeing, and float boating while resolving conflicts among various uses and protecting cultural resources and fragile soils. The demand for these activities is expected to increase as is the potential for user conflicts.

Sub-area L9a, 345 acres in Devil's Corral, would be closed to ORV use to protect cultural resources and soils. ORV use would be limited to designated roads and trails to protect soils in sub-area L9b, 354 acres. The remaining 14,918 acres would be open to ORV use.

Sub-areas L9a, L9b, and L9d, totalling 1,159 acres, lie within the proposed Dry Cataracts National Natural Landmark. Geologic formations associated with the Bonneville Flood, including alluvial gravel deposits, would be protected from human disturbances that would degrade their naturalness. Mineral material sales and free use would be prohibited.

Sub-area L9c, 819 acres, would be managed as described for L12, Areas of Geologic Interest.

Sub-area L9e, 374 acres, would be managed for protection, maintenance, and enhancement of wildlife habitat. These tracts are included in the existing Isolated Tracts HMP and would be covered by the revised HMP prepared for L11 areas in Alternative D.

Livestock grazing would not be restricted by recreation oriented management in L9.

The existing Snake River Rim Recreation Area Management Plan would be revised to reflect changes from existing ORV designations, acreage within the Snake River Rim SRMA, transfer area designations, float boating management, protection of geologic formations associated with the Bonneville Flood in sub-areas L9a, L9b, and L9d, wildlife management on sub-area L9e, and management of cave resources in sub-area L9c.

A cultural resource management plan would be prepared for Devil's Corral (L9a). This plan would specify the degree of protection and the interpretive measures appropriate for the areas. Fire suppression guidelines to limit surface disturbance would be developed and incorporated into the fire management plan.

L10-Cedar Fields SRMA. 2,240 acres. This area would be managed to provide a variety of recreation activities including ORV use, sport fishing, and river floating; to maintain or enhance wildlife habitat; and to protect scenic quality, fragile soils, and cultural resources.

ORV use would be limited to protect scenic areas, fragile soils, wildlife values, and cultural resources. ORV restrictions would be applied wherever damage to these resources is occurring or is expected to occur. Livestock grazing would not be restricted by recreation oriented management in the area.

The area would be withdrawn from mineral entry and leasing to protect scenic, cultural, and wildlife values, and to assure that public access to the Snake River is preserved.

A recreation activity management plan and a cultural resources management plan specifying the degree of protection and interpretive measures appropriate for the area would be prepared for the area. This would include fire suppression guidelines designed to protect fragile soils and cultural resources by limiting surface disturbance.

L11-Isolated Tracts. 14,849 acres. These tracts would be managed for protection, maintenance, and enhancement of wildlife habitat, primarily for upland game birds. In Alternative D, these are all existing and potential Isolated Tracts of medium or high value. Low value existing and potential Isolated Tracts are also generally included with the following exceptions.

1. Low value existing or potential Isolated Tracts were placed in a transfer category if a non-Bureau disposal proposal or agricultural entry application has been made on the tract and no other multiple use value warranted retention of the parcel.
2. Some low value potential Isolated Tracts covering large areas in the Lake Walcott area were identified as potential Isolated Tracts only in response to agricultural entry applications. Since these applications were not placed in a transfer category in Alternative D, the low value potential Isolated Tracts were not included in L11.

The existing Isolated Tracts HMP would be revised to reflect changes in the number of tracts. Sub-area L9e, described earlier in Alternative C, would be covered by the revised HMP. The modified HMP would include fire suppression guidelines to give some priority to protection of wildlife habitat on Isolated Tracts.

These areas would remain open to ORV use. Future ORV restrictions could occur on a case-by-case basis if necessary to protect wildlife or wildlife habitat.

Livestock would be excluded from 821 acres of Isolated Tracts by fencing.

The areas would be given priority for fire suppression in the fire management plan and would be under full suppression.

L12-Areas of Geologic Interest. 13,578 acres. These areas would be managed to preserve fragile geologic formations associated with caves. These are all of the identified Areas of Geologic Interest that lie outside WSAs recommended suitable for designation. All proposed projects would be examined to assure the formations are not adversely affected. To avoid possible adverse effects from increased public exposure, such as vandalism and removal of spellothems, access to caves would not be improved. The areas would remain open to ORV use. No surface occupancy associated with mineral lease development would be allowed within 250 feet of fragile geologic formations or caves.

A cave management plan would be prepared for these areas. This would include fire suppression guidelines to limit surface disturbance near the geologic formations.

T1-Transfer. 1,385 acres. These areas would be available for transfer from Federal ownership. Transfer could be by sale, exchange, agricultural entry, or other means as determined appropriate. Detailed examination would be conducted for these tracts prior to the final decision about transfer or type of transfer. Examinations would consider threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, and other resource values.

In Alternative D, only parcels of very low multiple use value are included in T1. Most parcels included in T1 have non-Bureau disposal proposals, agricultural entry applications, or trespasses on them. Agricultural and occupancy trespasses are included in T1 where multiple use values are low, a definite physical barrier to further encroachment exists, and disposal of the tract would solve the trespass problem. A definite physical barrier could be a natural barrier such as lava outcrops or a river, or a man-made barrier such as a road or canal. The trespass would be settled prior to transfer. Only the portion of a parcel necessary to resolve the trespass is included in T1.

T2-Transfer-Agricultural Entry. 3,029 acres. These areas would be available for transfer from Federal ownership under the agricultural land laws. Other types of transfers may occur only if agricultural entry transfers leave parcels in Federal ownership that are difficult to manage because of odd configuration, access problems, or lack of adequate facilities (fences, cattleguards, water, etc.). These resulting difficult-to-manage tracts could be transferred from Federal ownership by sale, exchange, or other means as determined appropriate as discussed under T1.

Up to 15 percent of the T2 areas could be retained in public ownership and managed as L11 areas under the Isolated Tracts HMP. Criteria to be used in selecting these areas are contained in Appendix C. The areas would be selected on a case-by-case basis as T2 lands are considered for transfer.

Studies to determine suitability under the agricultural land laws include economic feasibility, physical suitability for agriculture, water availability, threatened and endangered species clearance, and cultural resources clearance.

In Alternative D, only parcels of low multiple use value covered by an agricultural entry application are included in T2.

Other Resource Uses in Alternative D.

Fire Management. Portions of the planning area, totalling 186,532 acres, would be under full fire suppression in Alternative D. Vineyard Creek ACEC (L6) and Box Canyon ACEC (L7) would be under full suppression to protect the naturalness and scenic quality of the areas. The Substation Tract ACEC and Silver Sage Playa ACEC would be under full suppression to protect natural vegetation communities. The Isolated Tracts (L11) and Pronghorn Winter Range HMP area (discussed below under Wildlife Habitat) would be under full suppression to protect the vegetation, primarily brush, important to wildlife habitat management objectives. The areas discussed above would also be given priority for fire suppression in the fire management plan.

The remainder of the planning area would be covered by a limited suppression plan. The purpose of this plan would be to more efficiently use fire suppression funds. However, since the planning area is subject to large fires, limited suppression would only take place when the burning index is below 22. This would typically require full suppression during July and August. Large, repeated fires cannot be tolerated from the wildlife habitat and soil erosion standpoint.

The General Fire Suppression Guidelines in Appendix B under "Standard Operating Procedures" would apply to most of the planning area. Exceptions to these would occur in portions of the planning area totalling at least 356,477 acres. ^{1/} Surface disturbing equipment would be more likely to be used in Isolated Tracts (L11), Pronghorn Winter Range HMP areas (see Map 15), and brush protection areas to protect the vegetation, primarily brush, important to wildlife habitat management objectives. Surface disturbing equipment would also be more likely to be used in the Substation Tract ACEC and Silver Sage Playa ACEC to protect natural vegetation communities. On the other hand, use of surface disturbing equipment would be very limited in WSAs recommended suitable (L1) to protect wilderness character, in Cedar Fields -- SRMA (L10) to protect fragile soils and cultural resources, in the Oregon Trail area and Devil's Corral (L9a) to protect cultural resources, and in the Areas of Geologic Interest (L12) to protect fragile geologic formations. Guidelines for fire suppression in the above areas would be included in the fire management plan.

Prescribed fire could be used as a tool for accomplishing the 13,000 acres of brush control proposed under Livestock Forage. The guidelines for Prescribed Fire in Appendix D under "Range Improvements" would apply. The use of prescribed fire in areas other than those proposed for brush control would be allowed only if found to be environmentally acceptable through consideration of environmental effects in the NEPA process. Such use could include projects such as noxious weed abatement or habitat management not foreseen at this time.

Prescribed fire would not be used in Substation Tract ACEC (L4), Silver Sage Playa ACEC (L5), Vineyard Creek ACEC (L6), or Box Canyon/Blueheart Springs ACEC (L7).

In Alternative D, 140 miles of roads would be maintained annually to improve access for fire suppression forces, and provide secure fuel breaks that could be used for firelines. This would cost approximately \$14,000 annually. The roads to be maintained are presently very rough and/or infrequently used. Vegetation growing in the roadways limits their usefulness as fire lines. The objective of this road maintenance is to help suppression crews keep fires smaller. This would benefit the wildlife habitat and soil erosion situation greatly.

^{1/} The acreage involved in the brush protection areas and the Oregon Trail area is unknown at this time and would be determined in detailed examinations.

For Alternative D, roads would be maintained throughout the planning area. This includes areas with relatively low fire occurrence. This higher level of presuppression would be done to help assure that wildlife habitat, natural systems, and wilderness qualities were not adversely affected by wildfire.

Although other management practices to reduce wildfire size and occurrence are not proposed for Alternative D, they could be considered in the future as availability and effectiveness are demonstrated. Such practices might include seeding of fire resistant plant species in strips. The environmental effects of any such practices would be considered in the NEPA process before practices could be implemented.

Wildlife Habitat. Several wildlife habitat objectives have been covered under the discussion of multiple use areas for Alternative D. Habitat objectives for the hybrid trout are covered under L6-Vineyard Creek ACEC; for the Shoshone sculpin, they are covered under L7-Box Canyon/Blueheart Springs ACEC; for the Bliss Rapids snail, they are covered under both L6 and L7; for ring-necked pheasant and gray partridge (upland game birds), they are covered under L11-Isolated Tracts. The discussion in Fire Management above specifies actions that would benefit wildlife. Following is a discussion of other wildlife habitat objectives for Alternative D.

Brush areas valuable to wildlife would be given priority for fire suppression in the fire management plan. Specific areas of importance would be identified in detailed examinations and development of HMPs discussed below. Guidelines for fire suppression would be developed and incorporated into the fire management plan. Protection of brush pockets would be important in maintaining or enhancing habitat for sage grouse, pronghorn, mule deer, and non-game wildlife. It should be noted that areas of brush valuable to wildlife would likely change over time as some brush stands are burned by wildfire while others recover.

Artificial nest structures would be constructed for the ferruginous hawk, Swainson's hawk, and burrowing owl to increase populations. Specific numbers and locations of these structures would be determined in detailed examination of habitat suitable for each species. Ferruginous hawk nest structures would be placed in remote areas. Swainson's hawk nest structures would be placed on Isolated Tracts (L11). Burrowing owl nest boxes would be placed primarily on Isolated Tracts, but also throughout the breeding range.

A Sage Grouse HMP would be prepared to guide management in the sage grouse winter habitat area covering about 67,000 acres (see Map 7). Objectives of this HMP would be to maintain and enhance sage grouse habitat by maintaining adequate, suitable areas of brush and providing additional forbs for brood rearing. Suitable forbs would be included in range seedings in this area. Guidelines for fire suppression to protect brush would be developed and incorporated into the fire management plan.

A Pronghorn Winter Range HMP would be prepared for approximately 171,000 acres shown on Map 15. Objectives of this HMP would be to improve winter habitat for pronghorn by protecting valuable brush stands and increasing the brush component of the areas. Detailed examination would be required to determine the specific areas most important to the wintering animals. The possibility of seeding brush or fire resistant plant species would be examined for feasibility. Guidelines for fire suppression to protect brush would be developed and incorporated into the fire management plan.

A Pronghorn Summer Range HMP would be prepared for 60,000 acres in the Wildhorse Allotment (see Map 9). Objectives of this HMP would be to improve summer habitat for pronghorn by maintaining adequate areas of brush, providing additional forbs, and providing new water sources. Suitable forbs would be included in range seedings in this area. Guidelines for providing additional water sources would be developed. Guidelines for fire suppression to protect brush would be developed and incorporated into the fire management plan.

Livestock Forage. Provide 59,106 AUMs of livestock forage. Approximately 905,246 acres of public land would be included in grazing allotments (see Maps 1 and 9). Average stocking rate would be 15.3 acres per AUM.

The objectives for Alternative D would be to maintain existing perennial forage plants, maintain soil stability, and stabilize areas currently in downward trend.

The following range improvements would be accomplished in support of achieving the objectives stated above.

- 13,000 acres of brush control
- 38 miles of fencing
- 50 miles of pipeline
- 83 water troughs
- 5 wells
- 22 cattleguards
- 4 miles of road construction

Total Cost of Improvements = \$732,500

20-year Maintenance and Replacement Cost = \$342,000

The proposed preference level for Alternative D is the level that would be expected to be available in a low production year. It represents a 60 percent reduction from present active preference. Climatic fluctuations can affect forage production from annual vegetation greatly. The 1977 drought year had the greatest documented effect on annual vegetation production since the vegetation in the planning area has included the major annual vegetation component that it presently does. 1977 actual use data were used in arriving at a proposed preference level for Alternative D.

The initial stocking rate for Alternative D would be 97,892 AUMs (average actual use). Adjustments down to the proposed preference, 59,106 AUMs, would be done as discussed under implementation in Appendix D.

The range improvements proposed for Alternative D would be necessary to implement expected conversions from sheep use to cattle use and new AMPs. No new land treatments are proposed. The 13,000 acres of brush control is an on-going project covered by an existing AMP.

No changes in season of livestock use are proposed in Alternative D. This is because no resource conflicts were identified that would be resolved by such changes. However, changes in season of livestock use could be made in the future after considering environmental effects in the NEPA process if supported by monitoring.

New AMPs or CRMPs would be developed for nine allotments. This would bring the total area covered to 97 percent of the allotted acres.

In Alternative D, it is assumed that 8,529 sheep AUMs would be converted to cattle AUMs. Actual conversion would be consistent with the Shoshone District Conversion Policy. The assumed conversion is based on the same assumptions as described for Alternative B.

Cultural Resources. In addition to the Cultural Resource Management Plans discussed for Devil's Corral (L9a) and the Cedar Fields SRMA (L10), two other plans would be prepared; one for the Oregon Trail and one for Wilson Butte Cave. These plans would specify the degree of protection and the interpretation measures appropriate for the areas. In the case of the Oregon Trail, fire suppression guidelines to limit surface disturbance would be developed and incorporated into the fire management plan.

Soils. Several actions have been discussed which would help meet the objective of keeping soil erosion within tolerable levels. ORV use would be restricted in portions of the Snake River Rim SRMA (L9) and in the Cedar Fields SRMA to protect fragile soils. Fires would be given full suppression when the burning index is above 22 to help protect soils. Road maintenance would be conducted in key areas to help keep fires smaller, thus helping to protect soils.

In addition to the actions listed above, areas with severe erosion problems would be stabilized. At the present time, 150 acres of active sand dunes in the Lake Walcott area have been identified for a seeding project to stabilize the dunes. Other areas would be treated as they are identified, provided treatment would be feasible.

Priority would be given to emergency treatment of severe erosion areas caused by wildfire.

Summary of Activity Plans Required for Implementation of Alternative D.

Six Wilderness Management Plans (excluding Great Rift)

- One for each WSA recommended suitable.

One ORV Designation Implementation Plan

- Detailing how the ORV designations for the planning area would be implemented including public awareness, signing, and enforcement.

Three Recreation Activity Management Plans (RAMPs)

- One for each special recreation management area (SRMA)

Four Habitat Management Plans (HMPs)

- One would be a revision of the Isolated Tracts HMP.
- The others would be prepared for pronghorn winter range, pronghorn summer range, and sage grouse winter habitat.

Four Cultural Resource Management Plans

- One each for Devil's Corral, Cedar Fields, Wilson Butte Cave, and the Oregon Trail.

One Cave Management Plan

- For the L12 areas (Areas of Geologic Interest)

Nine AMPs, CRMPs, or other appropriate plans

- One for each of the nine allotments specified in Appendix D.

One Limited Fire Suppression Plan

The fire management plan will include guidelines to

- limit surface disturbance in WSAs recommended suitable, Cedar Fields SRMA, the Oregon Trail, and Areas of Geologic Interest.
- protect vegetation valuable to wildlife on Isolated Tracts, Pronghorn Winter Range HMP area, and brush protection areas.
- protect the naturalness and scenic quality of Vineyard Creek ACEC and Box Canyon/Blueheart Springs ACEC .
- protect the natural vegetation communities of the Substation Tract ACEC and Silver Sage Playa ACEC.

Some of the activity plans listed above may be consolidated into a single plan where two or more activities have activity plan needs in the same general area.

Sub-Alternative D

Proposed resource uses in Sub-Alternative D would be the same as for Alternative D in all respects except that there would be no livestock grazing. Therefore, no grazing preference would be proposed, no AMPs or CRMPs would be prepared, and no range improvements would be accomplished.

RELATIONSHIP OF ALTERNATIVES TO NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA) GOALS

The alternatives considered in this RMP/EIS all would achieve the requirements of sections 101 and 102(1) of NEPA and other environmental laws and policies. Each of the alternatives is designed to use practicable means to create and maintain conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony, but the emphasis is different in each alternative. Alternative A would place little emphasis on preservation of natural aspects of our national heritage and enhancement of the quality of renewable resources. Alternatives A, B, and D would limit the range of uses of the environment. Alternative C, the Preferred Alternative, would attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment while preserving important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage.